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STANFIELD HALL.

By J. F. SMITH,

Author of "Minnigrey," "Woman and Her Master," &c.



Illustrated by Sir JOHN GILBERT, R.A.
AND OTHER EMINENT ARTISTS.

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[DEATH OF KATHERINE OF ARRAGON.]

on the weakness which has spared him ! Would I had riven his body with my sword ! ”

The only reply of Anne Boleyn was to point to the secret entrance, the proof that the jester needed not their aid to have secured his safety by flight, had he felt so disposed.

Norris was silenced.

“ A year,” said Lady Rochfort, who was the first to recover her self-possession, “ is still before us. Wisely employed, it shall bring us safety. Courage, Anne, courage,” she continued ; “ could we but find into whose hands the letter hath been trusted, all would still be well.”

“ Right,” added Norris, starting from his reverie ; “ the jester will doubtless direct his steps to find his confidant. He must be watched.”

“ By whom ? ” demanded the queen.

“ By me,” replied the knight, casting upon her a look which the worthless sister-in-law of Anne Boleyn observed with secret displeasure ; “ to whom else would I trust the happiness of proving useful to my queen ? This fatal letter once in your grace’s hand, leave me to deal with these same boasters.”

“ Accomplish that, and count upon my lasting gratitude.”

At this moment the sound of trumpets in the great court announced the arrival of Henry.

“ Hasten to your apartment,” whispered Norris ; “ and deign to excuse my absence for awhile. I ask it the more boldly as the heavy hours will be employed in your best service, madam.”

With a few hasty words of adieu, Anne once more resumed her mask, and passing through the guard-chamber, contrived to reach her lodgings in the palace a few minutes before Henry entered them.

The morning after the interview between the queen and the jester in Wolsey’s gateway proved to be a bitter cold one ; the sleet, driven by a piercing wind, fell thickly and pitilessly upon the few straggling beings whom business or necessity compelled to tread the streets of London. The hour was still early when a foot-passenger, wrapped in a horseman’s warm cloak, was seen to direct his steps towards the monastery of Whitefriars, the residence of the celebrated Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, whom Katherine of Arragon had selected as one of her advocates in the question of her divorce. The traveller, who was no other than our old friend Patch, glanced keenly round the street to ascertain if he was observed, and seeing no one but a porter who, with a bale of goods upon his head, doubtless intended for some merchant in the City, had followed his footsteps from Charing Cross, he rapidly plunged down one of those narrow lanes in which the principal entrance to the abbatial mansion stood. Before ringing at the gate he cast a second glance around, and saw no one but the same eternal porter,

who had placed his burthen at the corner of the street and was resting himself upon it.

He rang and was admitted.

The porter no sooner saw where he entered than he quietly resumed his burden, and continued to carry it for a short distance down Fleet-street, till he was overtaken by a City 'prentice, to whom he resigned it, and, placing a silver crown in his hand, walked hastily away.

"I am in luck," muttered the 'prentice; "it is not every day I meet with a fool to carry my load and pay me for allowing him to do my work. Some madman, doubtless, with more money than wit."

The speaker was in error; Sir Henry Norris, on the contrary, had a great deal more wit than money.

That same night a party of pilgrims, who had remained to perform penance in the church, broke into Fisher's lodgings, and ransacked his private cabinet. They were no common robbers, for gold and many jewelled relics were left untouched, and but a single paper removed. Once possessed of that, they retired in various directions, before the community could assemble to interrupt them. That paper was the letter of Anne Boleyn to her lover Wyat—the robber, Norris, who trusted to make it the instrument of his amorous designs. It was some time before the jester was made acquainted with his loss, as immediately after his interview he had set sail for Antwerp.

Cranmer, whose convenient policy made him a favourite with the king, by the authority of the latter held a court at Dunstable, which place was chosen from its vicinity to Ampthill, the residence of Katherine, who refused, however, to acknowledge its jurisdiction, and never condescended to take the slightest notice of the citation addressed to her. The divorce was notwithstanding duly pronounced, and Anne Boleyn openly acknowledged as queen.

This complaisance on the part of Cranmer was the price which he paid for the primacy which, on the death of Warham, Henry had conferred on him.

The coronation of Anne was now determined on, and by the splendour of its arrangements the king no doubt intended at once to evince his contempt of Clement and the vacillating line of conduct which the unworthy pontiff had pursued.

A few days previous to the ceremony the queen was brought in great state from Greenwich to the Tower by water, the mayor and aldermen of London having the charge of conveying her thither in their barges. The boat in which the queen was seated was preceded by a waffer full of ordnance, in which was a dragon casting different coloured fires about him. Then followed the barges of the different companies, with their coverings of cloth of gold, and in some instances hung with innumerable little bells, which

danced in the wind. On one side of the mayor's barge was another waffer, on which was a mount, on the summit whereof stood a white falcon crowned, upon a pedestal of gold, encircled with white and red roses. Round the mount were virgins singing and playing. This was the device of Anne, who appeared in her own barge, attended by her father, by the Marquis of Dorset, the Earl of Arundel, and many nobles and bishops, each one in his barge.

On landing at the Tower, Henry received her with a loving kiss. Little did the thoughtless queen, in the intoxicating triumph of the hour, suspect how different would be her next reception there.

The next morning the queen was carried through the City in a litter open at the top, in order that the people might behold the object of their sovereign's affections.

On Whit-Sunday Anne went in still greater state from Westminster Hall, where the procession assembled, to the high altar of the Abbey; the monks and clergy in rich copes, and most of the nobility of the kingdom in their coronets and robes, preceded her.

Then followed the Marquis of Dorset, bearing the sceptre; the Earl of Arundel the rod of ivory and the dove; and the Earl of Oxford St. Edward's crown; last appeared the young and lovely queen, attired in a robe of purple velvet, under a canopy which was held over her head by the five barons of the Cinque Ports; the bishops of London and Winchester held the lappets of her robe, and the old Duchess of Norfolk bore up her train.

During the ceremonies of her coronation the youthful queen was attended, according to custom, throughout the day by one of the monks of Westminster, whose duty it was to dictate the responses she should say, and instruct her in the ceremonial as it proceeded. Just as the primate placed the crown upon the brow of the fair creature who knelt before him, and the shouts of all present hailed her with the cry of "Long live the queen! may the queen live for ever!" a single drop of blood fell apparently from the ceiling of the church upon her neck.

"What is that?" demanded Anne of the attendant monk, who trembled as he beheld it.

Before he could reply, Cranmer motioned him to keep silence.

The newly-crowned queen returned to her chair of state, but was no sooner seated than she repeated the question.

"Nothing, your majesty," replied Lady Rochfort, who, as her lady of the bed-chamber, stood near the throne; "a drop of moisture has fallen from the roof of the church upon your highness's neck—nothing more."

With these words the speaker applied her kerchief to remove the stain, and pretended to be satisfied; but whilst the anthem was pealing in her ears, her altered look proclaimed to those who knew her that her mind was ill at ease.

The feast was spread, according to ancient usage, in Westminster

Hall. Wyat, who had been permitted to return from exile, served his former mistress at dinner, on the occasion, as sewer. Henry and the ambassadors beheld the banquet from a sort of closet erected on the north side of the hall.

During the removes, before the wafer, cup, and comfits passed round, Anne, attended by her ladies, retired to her private chamber—there, as the old chronicler observes, to disport herself with dainty recreations. Many a musical laugh rang 'midst the fair group, nor was the voice of the queen silent on the occasion.

When the mirth was at the highest, she turned suddenly to Lady Rochfort, and asked her for her handkerchief. The artful woman, taken off her guard, without a thought presented it. Anne slowly unfolded it, and saw that it was stained with blood.

The next moment all was consternation—the queen had fainted.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON reaching Antwerp, the once proud city of palaces and trade, Walter and his youthful bride found Sir Richard Everil and his son anxiously expecting their arrival, of which they had been forewarned by the vigilant care of Patch, whose friendship, like the influence of their tutelary angel, still seemed to watch over and protect them. The hospitable old knight insisted on their taking up their abode with him in a mansion he had purchased close to the cathedral—that wondrous pile where religion has enshrined itself in art. Here Walter had the happiness of once more embracing his old friend, tutor, and guardian, Father Celestine, whose escape from the Lollards' Tower had been attended with such fearful risks. The venerable priest wept as he blessed him and his new-made bride.

The other inmates of their host's house were his son Edward and the youth Louis d'Auverne, whom the jester, as our readers will not fail to remember, had so peculiarly commended to Sir Richard's care. The first was a religious enthusiast, deeply imbued with those gloomy doctrines which paint the God of love as the inexorable judge—the stern avenger; which reject the innocent flowers scattered by His hand to cheer man's path through life, and find a morbid pleasure in seeking out the thorns. The second, although fast verging into manhood, was in thought and feeling still a child; persecution had made him timid, but failed to chill his confidence in human nature. Mutual suffering had made him and Edward Everil friends; he looked up to him as to a superior being, and his early faith was already gradually being shaken by the stern tenets of his companion.

As in the gradual development of our story these young men are destined to act a conspicuous part, this slight key to their respective characters will not be found useless to our readers.

Absorbed in their mutual happiness, here Walter and the heiress passed the first days of their wedded life; earth was to them a paradise, into which no serpent as yet had crept.

About two months after their arrival they were visited by the governor of Antwerp, Don Juan de Castro, a noble of high birth and military reputation, whose services on the field of Pavia had won for him the confidence, nay, almost the friendship, of his ambitious sovereign, the Emperor Charles V., to whose favour he owed his present post; he had but just returned from Madrid, where he had been summoned but three days previous to the exiles' departure from England.

The hidalgo in person was far below the average height; he possessed the head of a sage, placed by some caprice of nature upon the shoulders of a dwarf. The grave melancholy of his handsome countenance contrasted strangely with his almost child-like form, which, although well-knit and of faultless symmetry, scarcely reached to the shoulder of the fair one who had honoured him with her hand. The fair Inez had long been the reigning beauty of Madrid, and when, at the command of the emperor, she became the wife of his favourite general, there was no lack of epigrams to celebrate the event. These did not entirely cease till the bridegroom had killed three of the most distinguished wits of Spain in single combat, after which men became careful how they spoke of Don Juan de Castro and his beautiful wife, who, if not happy, at least appeared reconciled to her fate.

"Welcome, lady and cavalier," said their visitor, raising his plumed hat gracefully as Mary and Walter entered the apartment; "welcome to Antwerp. Although the voice is that of its unworthy governor, his words are those of a powerful prince—his gracious master Charles the Fifth, who honours in your person the cause of his wronged aunt, Katherine the queen. In obedience to my instructions," continued the don, "I have given orders that apartments should be prepared for you at the palace, where the senora anxiously awaits the pleasure of being presented to you."

These and similar obliging offers were gratefully declined, to the surprise and secret dissatisfaction of the governor, whose orthodox notions of propriety were offended at the idea of guests of his Catholic majesty residing under the same roof with a Lollard; an objection which the presence of Father Celestine scarcely served to remove.

After presenting the Lady Mary with a letter from the grateful Katherine, the visitor took a ceremonious leave, but not till he had forced upon them an invitation to a grand *fête*, to be given in five days' time, in honour of the birthday of the emperor—a courtesy

which it would have appeared ungrateful and impolitic to have refused.

The day of the emperor's *fête* at last arrived, when Walter and his bride, arrayed with a simplicity suited to their present fortunes, set forth to join the gay throng already assembled in the palace of the governor. Mary's dress consisted of a robe of white silk, seamed with silver, worn under a surcoat of black velvet, which, fitting tightly to her figure, displayed to advantage her graceful bust; a few pearls were twisted in her luxuriant hair, which, tied with knots of ribbon, fell in clustering curls over her fair shoulders. The golden chain and reliquary, the princess Mary's parting gift, hung round her lovely neck. Nor was the appearance of the gallant bridegroom less distinguished; his bright orange-coloured hose, of the finest Flanders cloth, fitted with his well-knit limbs, showing the play and movement of his muscles at every turn. As they mounted the great staircase, adorned with orange-trees and flowers, and lined by the Spanish guard, a murmur of admiration was distinctly audible; in sooth, a nobler pair had seldom pressed the marble steps.

In a rich saloon hung with the precious tapestries of Flanders, under a canopy adorned with the arms of Spain and Germany, stood the governor and his lady to receive the assembled guests. The person of the former we have already described, but to the beauty of the latter it would require the pen of a poet or the skill of a Titian to do full justice. It was of that graceful, goddess-like style which kindled admiration in some hearts more frequently than love. Her hair, black as the raven's wing, was gathered in a net of silver filigree, adorned with gems, whose lustre was eclipsed by the brilliant expression of her soul-subduing eyes—whose glances, when shaded by the passionate dreams of her young heart, rivalled the coruscation of the diamond, or the melting tenderness of the dove. Her countenance was as changeable in its expression as the surface of a lake, which reflects alike the gathering tempest and sleeping sunbeam. Her form, as stately as the antelope's, was draped in a ruby-coloured velvet robe, which displayed to perfection its statue-like proportions; the rich jewels which hung upon her arms and neck veiled rather than added to their dazzling beauty. She had been listening with a stately coldness to the compliments addressed to her by the heavy Flemish nobles and dignified Spaniards who formed a circle round her. When the English exiles were presented to her, both Walter and his bride thought they had never gazed upon a form more faultless, or a brow more fair. As with an animated air she returned their salutation, the listlessness of expression gradually gave place to one of interest and pleasure, and her face became radiant with smiles.

"You are welcome—most welcome," she exclaimed, "to our poor festival; but it is not thus I would have met you, surrounded by

a crowd and idle ceremony, in which the heart is chilled and the lips bound by cold observance. Here," she added in a half-reproachful tone, "you should have been my guests, not formal visitors."

The little governor cast a surprised and puzzled look of inquiry upon his wife, who had expressed bitter disappointment when he had made known to her the wish of his sovereign that the English strangers should be lodged in his own palace and treated as his guests—he did not as yet fully comprehend her.

After wandering some time through the rooms, Walter led his companion to a seat formed in an alcove, shaded by citron trees and rare exotics, where the guests, like moving pictures, passed in review before them.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Mary, who was delighted with the novelty of the scene; "and yet," she added, "it is sad to think that in a few brief years all who are here assembled—the brave, the young, the fair and happy—will have passed away like summer's flowers, and only leave a memory and a name."

"No more!" exclaimed a deep voice near them.

They started, for they had not perceived the approach of the speaker, a slim figure, in a plain Spanish dress, whose features were closely masked. There was something in the tone of the voice which impressed them with the idea that they had heard it before, but it was slightly altered by the mask.

"A countryman?" said Walter, for the stranger had spoken in English.

The mask bowed, and quietly took a seat beside them.

"Have you lately arrived from England?" demanded the Lady Mary, hesitatingly.

"But six hours since."

"Then," said Walter, "you can perhaps inform me of the fate of those in whom we are most interested. Does Henry still pursue his former favourite to destruction, or hath his heart relented?"

"The cardinal of York is now where Henry's friendship or Henry's hate are alike indifferent. Wolsey sleeps his last sleep in Leicester's holy pile."

"Dead!" exclaimed the exiles, in a voice of deep emotion, for theirs were not the hearts to forget the favours they had received at his once powerful hands.

The tears of the young bride fell fast as she remembered the interest which the cardinal had taken in her fate—his presence at the scene of her brave cousin's death—his sudden appearance on her trial, and subsequent protection.

"Lady," said the stranger, "these tears are Wolsey's noblest epitaph. Wealth may command the marble's stately lie, the herald's blazon, and the poet's verse, giving to infamy the reward of honour; but one simple tear on grateful virtue's cheek is praise

which speaks the judgment of the heart. I should prefer it to a hundred tombs."

"Henry," said Walter, "has lost the glory of his reign, learning its patron, England its statesman, and I," added he, in a melancholy tone, "a generous benefactor—a liberal friend."

"And Anne Boleyn?" inquired the heiress; "her ambitious dream——"

"At last is gratified," answered the stranger; "she is queen. But the crown," he continued, bitterly, "will prove a burden to her aching brow, the sceptre tire her hand. Her path lies by the precipice—death lies in ambush 'neath her very steps."

"I envy not her greatness," observed the fair questioner.

"Nor I her husband," drily added their singular companion; "but tell me, are there no other friends, no nearer ties whose fate may interest you?"

"Yes," exclaimed Mary, "there is one who——" Here the speaker suddenly paused as her eye met Walter's. The name of the jester was in the thought of both, but prudence whispered to name him not.

"Who—what?" demanded the mask.

"Must not be named," said Walter, in a decided tone, for he began to entertain suspicion that his countryman might prove to be a spy.

"Perhaps," observed the stranger, with a bitterness of tone which contrasted harshly with his previous voice, "he you would name may be of lowly birth—one poor in the world's gifts, of mean estate, despised of those who judge by glare and tinsel; if so, you are wise—most wise to forget him."

"He I would name," replied Walter, haughtily, for he was now confirmed in his suspicion, "was Wolsey's friend, who trusted few men lightly; his birth I reckon not; but his mind is noble, stored with such generous qualities as dwell in good men's hearts."

"Ah! you mean Cromwell?"

"No."

"Or Cavendish, the usher of his grace?"

"Nor he."

"You cannot mean his worthless jester, Patch?"

"Worthless!" exclaimed the indignant Walter, now thoroughly thrown off his guard by the slander of the man who had proved himself so true a friend. "To some minds virtue is ever worthless; there are men who judge mankind after their own vile standard, and you, sir, seem of these."

The speaker had started from his seat, and with flushed brow stood gazing upon the intruder, who, with provoking calmness, remained quietly by the side of the Lady Mary, who for some time had been regarding him. To her husband's astonishment, she gradually passed one arm round the shoulder of the stranger,

and with her disengaged hand removed his mask. In an instant the young man's anger was changed to joy—he beheld his old friend Patch.

"I am a fool," said Walter, as he pressed him warmly by the hand ; "I ought to have known the tree, from its bitter fruit ; but prithee, friend, blaspheme no more 'gainst friendship and thyself."

"Lady," said the jester, with a smile, "you have saved me from a false position. After such commendation, modesty had glued my mask so tightly to my face, I should have risked my skin ere I removed it."

"Had I but known, I would have caught thee," continued his friend, "like a woodcock in thine own springe—have probed that moral ulcer of thy mind, which makes thee doubt of all but vice, mistrusting thyself e'en more than thou mistrustest virtue."

"One thing is certain," replied the cynical being, shaking his head mournfully at the accusation, "that I mistrust not thee. But tell me," he added, willing to change the subject, which was evidently a painful one, "how liketh thou this gay mart of commerce and beauty ? Look to him, lady ; here are flashing eyes and stately forms, lips that persuade feeble hearts to play the truant."

The young bride raised her eyes to the features of her husband, and saw a look so full of tenderness and love, that she smiled at the half-playful, half-mischievous caution of the speaker.

"I fear them not," answered the Lady Mary ; "they must have hearts as well as eyes to win him."

"And even then," said Walter, "they would fail. Mine is so full of thee, it hath scant room for any second guest. But how knew you we were here ?"

"From Sir Richard Everil," said Patch ; "and so, the governor and I being old friends, I took a gossip's leave, and came in search of you. Have you seen his wife ?"

"I have."

"And what think you of her ?" demanded his questioner, who had been an observer of the interview, and watched the expression of the lady's countenance.

"That she is beautiful," replied his friend, in an unembarrassed manner, which showed that for the present he at least was heart-whole, "perhaps too beautiful ; more of humanity would please me better—to me there is always something heartless in a faultless face." The jester smiled, for the opinion was his own.

Anxious to converse without restraint, the three friends returned to the grand saloon, to make their excuses and adieux to their hospitable host. The governor bowed gravely as he listened to them ; and the fair brow of his wife, before all radiant in smiles, became suddenly clouded.

"So soon !" she exclaimed ; "not at least till you have partaken of our worthless banquet."

The courtesy was again gratefully declined ; but Walter and his bride were not permitted to depart till they had promised their fair hostess speedily to renew their visit at her villa beyond the Mechlin gate,—“where,” she observed, “she could receive her guest without the form which surrounded her in the city, where, as wife of the governor, she was compelled to hold a kind of petty court.”

“Farewell,” she softly murmured, as Walter, according to Spanish etiquette, bent to kiss her hand. The word was accompanied by a look which, but for his love for the heiress, would have dwelt long upon his memory. Fortunately Patch was the only person who noticed it ; but, indeed, few things escaped the jester’s vigilance.

“She certainly is very beautiful,” said the young man, as they descended the marble stairs.

“And seems as good as she is lovely,” added the Lady Mary.

Their companion heard both the observations, but continued silent.

It soon became evident that the Lady Inez had conceived a violent friendship for the gentle English girl, whose quiet nature contrasted so strongly with her own ; not but that the fair Spaniard could be quiet, too, when it answered her purpose. To Walter she displayed an easy, polite indifference, leaving the little don to dispose of his time either in hawking, or in hunting the wild boar—a species of game still occasionally found in the woods lying between Antwerp and Malines. To please his wife, whose will on most points was law, the governor had even consented that the Lollards, as he disdainfully termed them, should be sometimes invited to the villa ; and Edward Everil and Louis d’Auverne became in time frequent guests there. The latter, since the arrival of Patch, had shaken off, though but in a slight degree, the influence which his companion exercised over him.

The heart of the poor boy was naturally affectionate and trusting ; the jester’s countenance and Walter’s example bade him look upon the world as something brighter than a vale of tears. They impressed him with the conviction that there was sunshine too.

It was at the close of a sultry day that the strangers were assembled at the villa, for in the summer Inez seldom visited the city. The governor, during his noon repast, had received a summons of so important a nature that he left his meal unfinished, and despite the burning heat, started on horseback for Antwerp,—not, however, without offering his usual punctilious excuses to his visitors. There had been a pause towards the evening ; conversation had become languid, when some one proposed that they should sally forth to meet Don Juan de Castro on his return ; an idea which seemed to hit the taste of all, for it was instantly adopted, and the party sallied forth, the lady of the mansion leaning on the arm of Walter, and the Lady Mary accompanied by Louis, Edward, and others of the guests.

As they proceeded, the party gradually got dispersed, and Walter and Inez found themselves alone in one of the most retired parts of the wood, into which they had strayed, unintentionally no doubt. It was a night such as love revels in. The light was of that mellow tone which golden sunset and the rising moon cast on the twilight east. At such an hour and in such a place the lovely Spaniard was a dangerous companion.

"How often have I wished at such an hour," sighed the fair siren, "that destiny had cast my lot far from the world's vain grandeurs, and that with one loved object I had lived in peace, listening to no deeper music than the song-bird's note, breathing no richer perfume than the wild flower's breath. Alas! why was not such a fate reserved for me?"

"For you, lady," replied her companion, "you who are born to rule a court—whose queen-like step mocks the dull earth it treads on!—a cottage and a rustic life for you! You jest."

"The heart never jests—and 'twas from the heart I spake."

"This is a thought of sadness, lady," continued the young man, moved by the melancholy tone in which she answered him; "one of those spots upon the sun's bright disc, which aid us to bear its lustre, or jealous cloud marring a summer sky. With your lord's return, I shall again behold thy beauty decked in smiles and gladness."

"In smiles," repeated Inez, "possibly; but never more in gladness; that hath been long an exile from my breast. Mine," she added, "is a wayward nature—my smiles are for those I love not; my tears for those I love. Fools who think that gems upon the brow can heal the wound which rankles in the heart, deem that I am happy, envy me. Heaven!" she continued, pressing her hand on Walter's arm, "they little know the wretchedness they envy."

"Wretchedness!" exclaimed Walter, deeply moved, "impossible! Thou hast station, wealth, thy husband's love, the world's respect. What would'st thou more?"

"A heart to feel with mine," replied Inez, passionately—"a soul to comprehend me—a temple where I could enshrine myself, and know no world beyond. Canst thou not," she continued, moving her ivory arm from his, and passing it gradually round his neck, "imagine to a nature framed like mine the strength of such a love?"

"Lady," said Walter, faintly struggling with his resolution, for it was scarcely in human virtue to resist the glance, the intoxicating dream of such a passion, "tempt not humanity beyond its strength. Let us return; our absence will be made the theme of comment."

"Ingrate," softly sighed the temptress, at the same time letting her head sink upon his shoulder, and raising her eyes, no longer brilliant, but subdued by languor, to his, "thousands have sighed to gain the heart which only beats for thee."

How the struggle between virtue and temptation would have ended it is impossible to decide, for at this moment the voice of Patch was heard calling on Walter from a thicket near them. Pressing a burning kiss upon his lips, the guilty woman—guilty in heart, at least—started from his embrace, and fled by a narrow footpath towards the villa.

"Thank Heaven!" sighed Walter, "she is gone, and I can still respect myself and meet my Mary's smile. We must never meet alone again. The cup of Circe is less dangerous than her beauty."

"Hilloa, Walter!" continued the jester, advancing still nearer towards the spot where the speaker stood. "So," said Patch, "thou art found at last. Prithee, man, what has detained thee? a sonnet to the moon? or hath some wood nymph crossed thy path while gazing on the stars?"

"Neither," replied his friend, holding out his hand to him; "but for once a truce to jesting. Never came friend more welcome to his friend than thou to me this hour."

"Truly?" replied the jester, fixing an inquiring glance upon him.

"Truly," repeated Walter; "dost thou doubt me?"

"Then all is well," said Patch, "and now let's in together. Don Juan de Castro has arrived and twice demanded you; it seems his sudden departure for Antwerp had some relation unto us. We must return to-night."

On entering the saloon where the party were once more assembled, Walter found his fair hostess seated by the side of his unsuspecting wife. All trace of passion or excitement had disappeared from the features of the Lady Inez. The young man shuddered as he remembered the words she had so lately uttered in his hearing, that her smiles were for those she loved not. And there she sat, like some demon clothed in light, smiling on his wife.

As the two friends entered the room the governor advanced to meet them, and drawing them into one of the recesses formed by the projecting windows, conversed with them for a considerable time, but in so low a tone that even the watchful ear of the lady of the villa failed to catch a word. From his calm manner she judged, however, and truly, that her husband had no suspicion of her interview with Walter in the wood; and that conviction reassured her.

"I have ordered the escort to remain," said Don Juan de Castro, as he advanced with his guests into the centre of the apartment to take leave of his wife. "They will ride with you through the wood."

"What!" exclaimed Inez; "do you depart to-night?"

"Intelligence has arrived which compels me," replied Walter; "my lord will be my voucher."

The governor bowed in confirmation of his words.

"I cannot part with all my guests at once," said their hostess ; "at least, let my fair friend remain."

Walter felt, he knew not why, a sudden disinclination to be separated, even for an hour, from his young bride, especially under the roof of the governor's lady. Throwing his arm round her waist, he answered, playfully, that she was used to travel, and that a night ride of a few miles was soon achieved. A look of gratitude from the Lady Mary thanked her husband for deciding for her. Inez beheld that look ; and the pang it caused her jealous heart atoned, if suffering could atone, her folly.

The great bell of the cathedral struck the hour of twelve as the travellers drew rein before the mansion of Sir Richard Everil. Walter and Patch, however, did not enter ; but after seeing their companion safely housed, they made their way, according to the governor's instructions, to the church of the Dominicans, so well known in Antwerp.

"Who can this stranger be, or what his errand ?" demanded Walter of his companion, as they walked along.

The jester suggested that it was probably a messenger from the emperor.

Their curiosity was soon gratified, for on reaching the church in question they found a brother waiting for them, who, after ascertaining that they were the right parties, conducted them to the house of the superior, where they were presented to a short, shrewd-looking man, dressed in black velvet, but without any ensign to mark his rank beyond those nameless characteristics which denote the gentleman. He bowed as his visitors approached, but without quitting his chair or removing the plumed hat which partially shaded his countenance. The superior of the Dominicans, with folded arms, stood beside him.

"Welcome, gentlemen," he exclaimed, in a low, musical voice. "Don Juan has doubtless informed you that I am commissioned by the emperor to inquire from your own lips what more is in his power to offer to prove his gratitude for your service in the cause of his unhappy aunt."

"For myself," said Walter, "the friendship of the governor, and the generous protection of his majesty, leave me nothing more to ask."

"And I," said the jester, "have done little to merit either your master's interest or his favour."

"I fear me, then," said the stranger, "my mission will be vain, for Charles has a service to solicit at your hands of too much danger to be lightly undertaken, or meanly paid when done."

"Does your monarch think," demanded Patch, "that services are only to be bought?—that men sell deeds of honour as vile hucksters barter merchandise for the ignoble gain? 'Tis a

common error, this mistrust of human nature—monarchs should be above it. Name the service," he added, "and if honour sanctions it, or courage can achieve it, tell your imperial master to conclude it done."

The Spaniard fixed his eyes upon the speaker with a searching glance, as if he would read his very thoughts; but the jester met his regard with a look as haughty as his own. The former was the first to speak.

"Katherine of Arragon," he said, "crushed by her wrongs and her false husband's tyranny, draws near her end. The injured queen hath not, perchance, another month to live."

"Her throne hath proved to her a seat of thorns," observed the jester; "earth hath few ties to bind her."

"You forget one," interrupted the stranger; "she is a mother."

"True," said Patch; "I imagined you thought only of the queen."

"Henry," continued the envoy, his pale face flushed with anger as he spoke, "refuses her the last consolation left a dying mother's heart—her child's embrace—unless she admits the dishonour of her blood, and acknowledges the divorce which placed Anne Boleyn on the throne."

"And Charles," observed the jester with a sneer, "feels for the honour of his aunt more than the yearnings of her love."

"The friends of the unhappy queen," added the speaker, without heeding the interruption, "who reside in England are strictly watched. The Lady Salisbury, under whose ward the Princess Mary lies, hath, after much prayer, consented to conceal her highness's absence for three days to visit her dying mother, receive her blessing, and her last embrace."

"And the service you demand?" said Walter.

"Is to proceed to England, conduct the princess to her mother, guide her in safety back, and then return."

"When must we depart?"

"To-morrow."

"As soon as the bark is ready we set sail; but how," continued our hero, "am I to obtain the confidence of Lady Salisbury, to whom I am a stranger?"

"That," replied the envoy, "is provided for:" here the speaker drew a gem ring from his finger, and placed it in Walter's hand; "this token will prove a pledge between you."

"Farewell!" said Walter. "Should I fall in the attempt, I trust to Charles's honour to protect my helpless wife."

"Doubt not his gratitude," replied the stranger, "or my promise."

"What think you of our expedition, Patch?" demanded his companion, as they left the church of the Dominicans. "Why, man, thou art as silent as the graves we tread upon. Dost thou

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COUNTY OF DALLAS

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that I, JAMES W. WATKINS

do hereby certify that the within and foregoing

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of the original as the same appears from the records

of the County of Dallas, State of Texas.

Witness my hand and seal of office this 1st day of

January, 1901.

JAMES W. WATKINS, County Clerk.

My commission expires this 1st day of

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
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